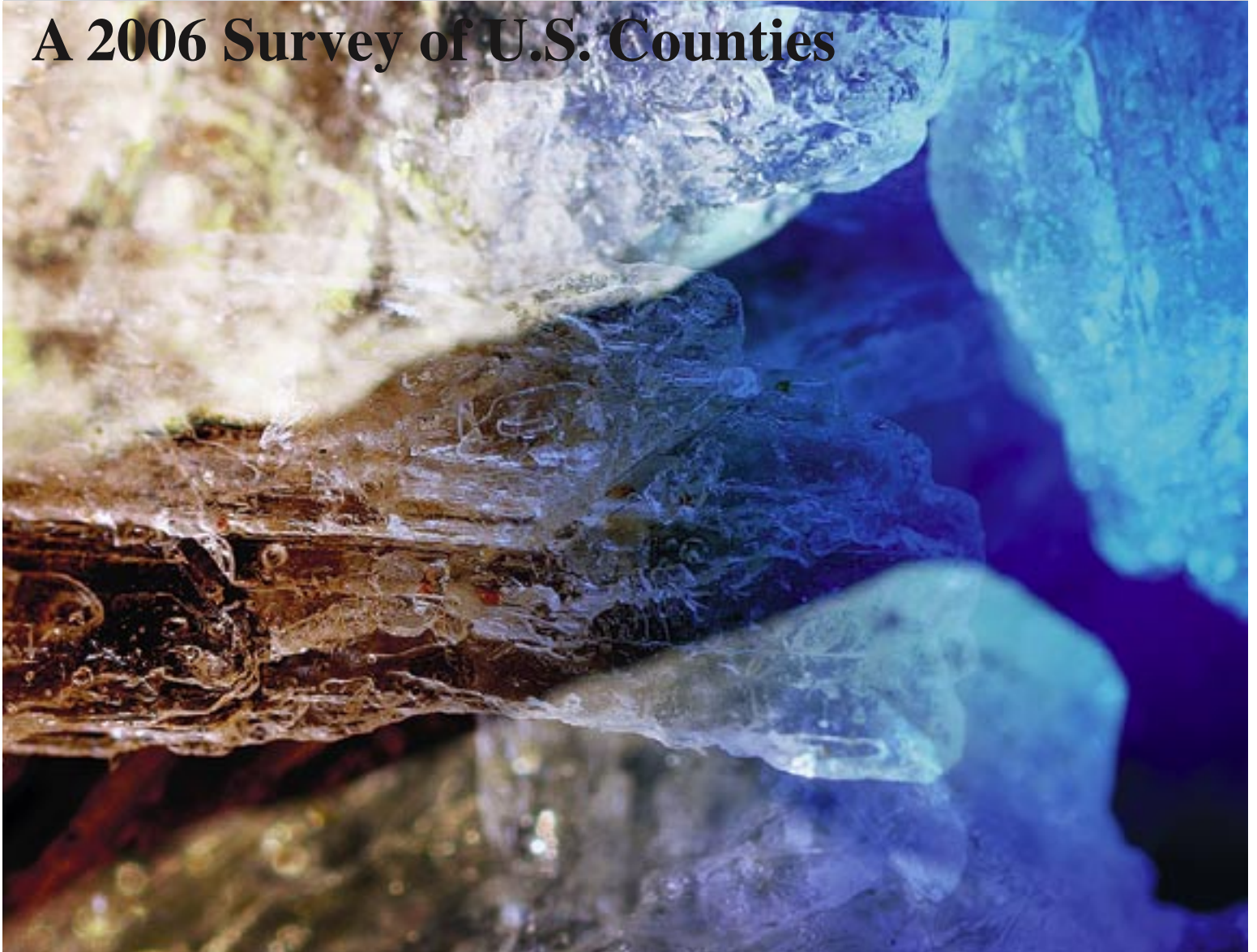


The Meth Epidemic in America

The Criminal Effect of Meth on Communities

A 2006 Survey of U.S. Counties



July 18, 2006

Bill Hansell
NACo President

NACo *National Association of Counties*

Counties Care for America



National Association of Counties

Founded in 1935, the National Association of Counties (NACo) is the only national organization in the country that represents county governments. With headquarters on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., NACo's primary mission is to ensure that the county government message is heard and understood in the White House and in the halls of Congress.

NACo's purpose and objectives are to:

- Serve as a liaison with other levels of government;
- Improve public understanding of counties;
- Act as a national advocate for counties; and
- Help counties find innovative methods for meeting the challenges they face.

This report is made possible in part by financial support from the Target Corporation (www.target.com) and Netsmart Technologies, Inc. "Connecting health and human service communities through information technologies" www.ntst.com

This special report is a joint effort between the Legislative Affairs Department, the Research Division and the Public Affairs Department. Survey design and analysis was completed by the Research Division of the County Services Department.



The Meth Epidemic in America

The Criminal Effect of Meth on Communities
A 2006 Survey of U.S. Counties

July 18, 2006

Bill Hansell
NACo President



Executive Summary

The methamphetamine epidemic continues to have a devastating effect in our country. Not only is the use of the drug spreading from the West to the East, it is also affecting all types of communities including urban, rural and suburban communities. Counties have been addressing the meth epidemic for years and have been instrumental in shedding light on this growing problem.

County governments and their taxpayers have been paying for the closing and clean up of meth labs, seeing their jails overflow with inmates who commit various crimes while using meth and to support their meth addiction and seeing the growing numbers of children in out of home placement because of parental addiction. Counties have been struggling with funding for law enforcement, treatment and for interagency task forces and/or regional task forces to address the epidemic. Although recently passed precursor legislation has reduced the number of small meth labs, it does not address addiction and therefore has not reduced the use of methamphetamines in most jurisdictions. Meth remains a multifaceted problem that will take more than one solution.

Meth causes many societal problems that counties by law are required to address. In order to spotlight some of these problems and to provide a better understanding of its effect, the National Association of Counties (NACo) undertook a series of surveys to determine the impact of meth on county government programs and activities. The first two surveys, conducted in June 2005, provided valuable information about the impact of meth on public safety programs and out of home placement programs. A second set of surveys conducted in January 2006 focused on the impact of meth on treatment programs and county hospitals. This, the fifth survey in the series, revisited public safety officials one year later to determine if precursor legislation has impacted the meth epidemic and to track its continued growth.

The telephone survey was conducted by Research, Inc. of Washington, DC, which contacted 500 county law enforcement officials in 44 states. A summary of the survey reveals:

The Criminal Effect of Meth on Communities

- **Meth continues to be the number one drug problem** – More counties (48%) report that meth is the primary drug problem – more than cocaine (22%), marijuana (22%) and heroin (3%) combined.
- **Legislation that restricts the sale of precursors works** – Ninety percent of counties have some kind of precursor legislation in effect. Forty-six percent of sheriffs report that the number of meth lab busts is down because of precursor legislation in their jurisdictions.
- **Crimes related to meth continue to grow** - Fifty-five percent of law enforcement officials report an increase in robberies or burglaries in the last year and 48% report an increase in domestic violence.
- **Meth has increased the workload of public safety staff** - Sixty-three percent of counties report an increased workload in the last year and 73% report that they are paying more overtime.
- **Meth related arrests continue to represent a high proportion of crimes that require incarceration**- Forty-eight percent of counties report that up to 1 in 5 inmates are incarcerated because of meth related crimes. Seventeen percent report that 1 in 2 inmates are incarcerated because of meth related crimes.
- **The majority of meth currently being used is from outside of the state** – Eighty-five percent report out of state importation and 71% report importation from Mexico.

The Criminal Effect of Meth on Communities

In June 2006 the National Association of Counties (NACo) conducted a survey of county law enforcement agencies to determine "The Criminal Effect of Meth on Communities." This survey includes responses from a random survey group of 500 sheriffs in 44 states.

This survey was a follow up to a survey NACo released in July 2005. The 2005 survey included responses from 500 sheriffs in 45 states. This year, on the anniversary of that survey, NACo is releasing the results of its latest survey on the effects of methamphetamine on county public safety programs and the communities they serve.

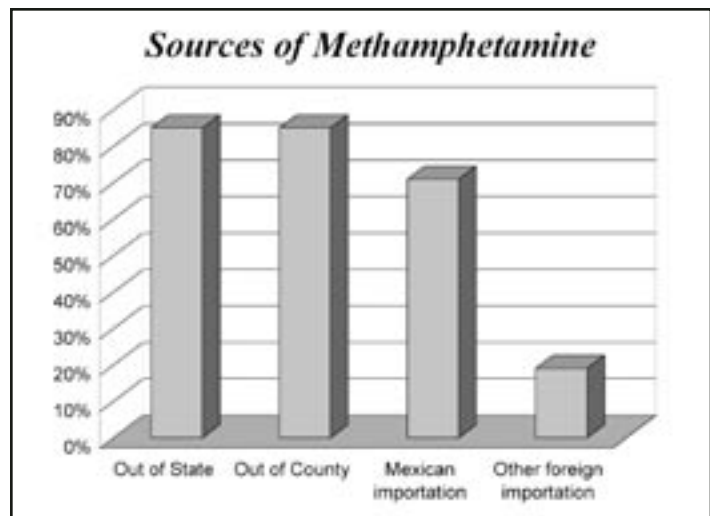
In between the release of the two surveys, many counties have seen precursor limitation legislation come into effect. Precursor legislation limits the ability to purchase pseudoephedrine, an ingredient in many over the counter cold medications and one of the primary ingredients needed for the manufacture of methamphetamine in illegal home labs. Since the release of last year's survey, NACo has been in the forefront of getting precursor legislation passed at the national level. This new legislation will take effect in September 30, 2006.

The telephone survey was conducted by Research, Inc., of Washington, DC. The county law enforcement agencies were asked about the methamphetamine experience in their counties since the last survey. This new survey group includes more counties in the Midwest and the Eastern U.S. and more mid size counties with populations between 25,000 and 250,000 than the previous year's sample.

Precursor Limitation Legislation

When asked if restrictions on the purchases of precursors were in place in their county during the last year, 90% said yes. The majority (91%) of those with precursor legislation indicate that the legislation was imposed by state law, 6% say that they have their own county ordinance and 8% said that these were voluntary restrictions imposed by vendors. Only 74% of the counties in the northeast report precursor limitation while 96% in the southwest report having these restrictions in place.

In light of the growth in precursor legislation during the last year, making it much more difficult for the home manufacture of methamphetamine, lab seizures are reportedly down dramatically for most law enforcement agencies. As a result of this decrease, sheriffs were asked if the arrests in their counties had increased or not. Fifty-nine percent report no increase and 38% report an increase. The next question was specifically asking about the number of methamphetamine lab seizures in the county. Forty-six percent of the sheriffs indicated that they have seen a decrease in methamphetamine lab seizures during the last year, 41% report that they stayed the same and 12% reported an increase. Eighty-four percent of reporting sheriffs in South Dakota and 67% of sheriffs in Pennsylvania report that lab seizures remained the same during the last year. The Southeast is the region reporting the largest increase (22%) in lab seizures while the Northwest, at only 4%, reports the lowest. This information supports the law enforcement trend information that indicates that the methamphetamine epidemic is moving from West to East with methamphetamine spreading rapidly into the Southeastern part of the country.



Counties that reported decreases in methamphetamine lab seizures were asked what percentage decrease they saw during the last year. Fifty-seven percent of the sheriffs indicated that they had more than a 50% decrease and 18% percent had between 20% and 30% decrease. Fifty-three percent of counties in Minnesota report a more than 75% decrease and 70% of counties with decreases in this same range have populations below 25,000.

Sheriffs that reported a decrease in lab seizures were asked where local methamphetamine users were getting their methamphetamine now that many of the small labs are no longer in business. Eighty-five percent reported that methamphetamine was coming from out of county and the same percentage indicated that out of state importation was meeting the methamphetamine needs of residents. Seventy-one percent of sheriffs say that Mexican drug importation is replacing local manufacture and 19% indicate other foreign drug sources. Forty percent of sheriffs in the Northwest reporting a decrease say that drugs are now being imported from Mexico and 38% of the sheriffs in the Lower Midwest and Upper Midwest say the same.

Total Methamphetamine Arrests

More than 48% of sheriffs indicate that up to 20% of their arrests during the last year were methamphetamine related, as compared to 51% citing that percentage in last year's survey. Seventeen percent report that more than 50% of their arrests are methamphetamine related, the same percentage as in the last survey. Eighty-three percent of responding sheriffs in New York report that up to 10% of their arrests are methamphetamine related, as do 68% of reporting sheriffs in Michigan and South Dakota. Sixty-three percent of sheriffs in Oklahoma report that between 50% and 75% of arrests in their counties are methamphetamine related.

What is the Primary Drug Problem in Your County?

Forty-eight percent of the sheriffs report that methamphetamine is the number one drug problem in their counties, followed by 22% percent reporting cocaine and 22% reporting marijuana as the primary drug problem. Only 3% of sheriffs indicate that heroin is the number one drug. Fifty-one percent of counties with populations below 50,000 say that methamphetamine is the primary drug, while 54% of counties between 10,000 and 25,000 report methamphetamine is number one. Only 33% of counties above 250,000 say

methamphetamine is the primary drug, verifying the historical trend of the popularity of methamphetamine in more rural areas.

In Arizona, California, Idaho, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, Washington and Wyoming, 100% of responding sheriffs say that methamphetamine is the number one drug, while none of the sheriffs in Maine, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, South Carolina and Vermont indicate that methamphetamine is number one. This information is followed by Oklahoma with 88% of sheriffs reporting methamphetamine is number one, Iowa at 79%, Louisiana at 75%, Nebraska at 74% and Oregon at 71%. This information correlates with the national trend that methamphetamine is a drug that is largely popular in western rural areas and is spreading across the country from west to east. Sixty-three percent of Georgia sheriffs say methamphetamine is number one, 44% of North Carolina sheriffs and 43% of Alabama sheriffs indicate the same. This information verifies law enforcement trends that methamphetamine is growing dramatically in the Southeastern region of the country and is moving slowly into the northeast.

Regionally, 75% of sheriffs in the Southwest and 74% of sheriffs in the Northwest report methamphetamine is the number one drug, while only 6% of sheriffs in the Northeast report the same.

Rehabilitation Programs

In response to whether the county sponsors or facilitates a methamphetamine rehabilitation center or program, 81% of sheriffs indicated that their county did not. Only 16% report sponsoring a rehab program, the same response as in last year's survey. The same scenario remains in place as last year. The majority of methamphetamine users who have committed crimes are being housed in local jails.

Incarceration of Inmates because of Methamphetamine Related Crimes

When asked what percentage of current jail inmates in the county are incarcerated because of methamphetamine related crimes, 48% report up to 20% (compared to 50% reporting that percentage in last year's survey) while 17% report between 50% and 100%. In the smallest counties, those with a population of less than 50,000, 18% report 50% or more of the incarcerated are there for methamphetamine related crimes and 6% of counties in that same population group indicate that more than 75% of their prisoners are there for

methamphetamine related crimes. In the Northwest, 44% of counties report that 50% or more of their inmates are incarcerated because of methamphetamine related crimes, and 21% say that more than 75% are there because of methamphetamine.

Impact of Methamphetamine on Current Law Enforcement Activities

The ongoing presence of methamphetamine use has increased the workloads of most reporting sheriff's departments. Sixty-three percent report that they have experienced continuing growth in the workload of their public safety staff during the last year. The Northwest region, where methamphetamine use has been in existence for years, has the highest percentage of counties (74%) reporting an increased workload, followed by the Southeast at 72%, where the use of methamphetamine is increasing rapidly.

Seventy-three percent of counties report that paying more overtime to officers engaged in methamphetamine related crime fighting has increased the financial burden on the county during the last year. This is compared with only 52% reporting increased overtime payments in last year's survey.

At the same time that many counties are reporting increased overtime, 63% of counties with increased workloads are reporting longer shifts for officers as a result of methamphetamine related crimes and 70% of counties report changed work assignments.

Crimes Continue to Increase because of Methamphetamine Use

As a result of the growth in the use of methamphetamine, 55 percent of counties report an increase in robbery or burglary during the last year. This continuing increase was forecast in the last survey where 70% of counties reported increases in these crimes during the prior year. In addition, 48% of counties report continuing increases in domestic violence and 41% report continuing increases in simple assaults. The crime of identity theft, reported as a methamphetamine related crime in the previous year's survey by 27% of sheriffs, has grown with 31% of sheriffs reporting an increase in this crime in the county in this year's responses.

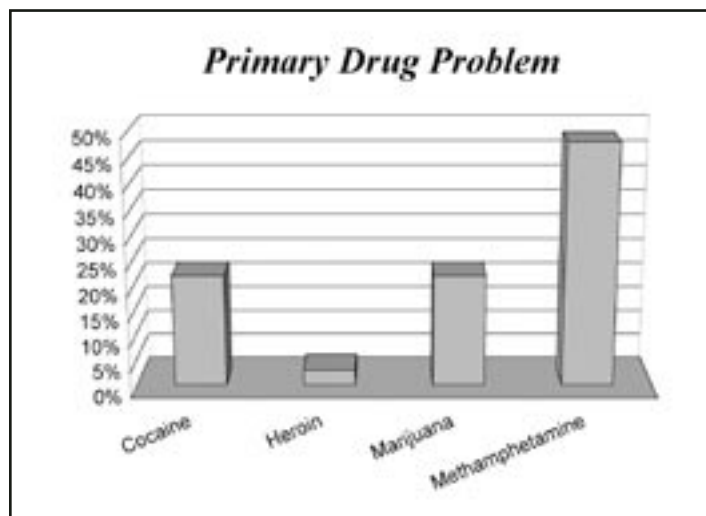
Fighting Methamphetamine Growth

Since the growth of methamphetamine use is spreading widely, many counties recognize that they have to look beyond the sheriff's department and often beyond their borders to address the problem. As a result 36% report that they have established an interagency task force in the last year and 39% report joining an intergovernmental or regional task force during the same period of time. Seventy percent of counties in Idaho and 67% of counties in California report being members of an interagency task force, while none of the counties in Maine, Maryland, New Hampshire, New Jersey or New Mexico report belonging to such a task force.

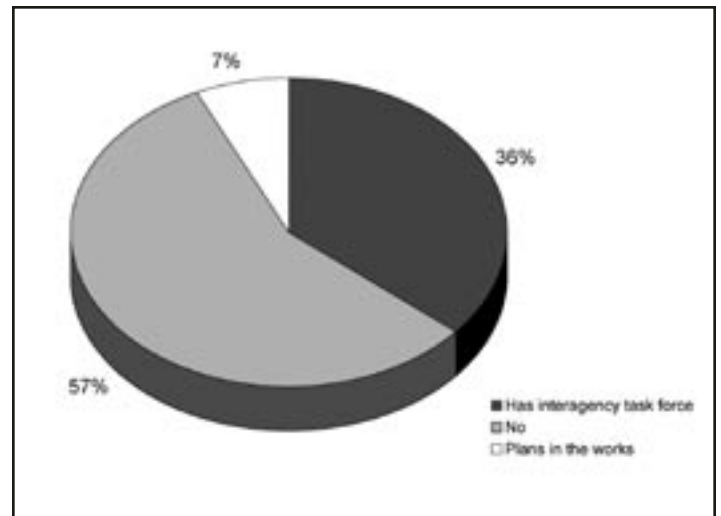
In some states counties are looking more to regional task forces as a means of fighting methamphetamine use than others. Seventy percent of counties in Idaho are members of a regional task force as are 60% of counties in Minnesota and Nevada, while no counties in California, Maryland, Vermont and Wyoming report such membership.

Funding the Fight against Methamphetamine

As the use of methamphetamine spreads to more areas of the coun-



try, it cannot be looked at as just a western rural problem. Counties in Georgia have seen a huge growth in lab seizures in the last couple of years, as have counties in other states where several years ago, methamphetamine was not considered a problem. Counties have long been financing the fight against methamphetamine with county funds and what other funds they have been able to acquire from both the state and federal governments. The proposed elimination of Justice Assistance Grants, one of the few sources of federal funds for the fight against methamphetamine will impact the law enforcement efforts of 82% of counties that responded to this survey. Eighty percent of these counties report that eliminating this funding source will increase the need for additional county funding, while 51% say that it will require the dismantling of county and other methamphetamine task forces. Sixty one percent say that elimination of these funds will require the reassignment of law enforcement staff and 51% report that cuts to these grants will require them to cut staff currently dedicated to methamphetamine enforcement.



Methamphetamine Survey: Public Safety

Last year, in response to heightened concern by many county officials, The National Association of Counties conducted four surveys on the impact of methamphetamine on county programs and services. The results of these surveys were instrumental in increasing the awareness of the meth epidemic. The National Association of Counties is again conducting a brief telephone survey to revisit the issue and to determine how the increased awareness and legislative activities that occurred as a result of the surveys has impacted public safety. Can you take a few minutes to answer a few questions that will provide information for a national report that will be released in July?

1. Have precursor restrictions on the sale of methamphetamine ingredients, such as pseudophedrine, been in place in your county during the last year?

Yes – 90%
Yes, restrictions imposed by county ordinance – 6%
Yes, restrictions imposed by state law – 91%
Yes, voluntary restrictions imposed by vendors – 48%
No – 8%
Other – 2%

2. Have arrests where methamphetamine was involved increased in your county during the last year?

Yes – 38%
No – 59%
Don't Know – 3%

3. Have the number of methamphetamine lab seizures changed in your county during the last year?

Increased – 12%
Decreased – 46%
Stayed the same – 41%

4. If the number of methamphetamine lab seizures decreased, what is the percentage change?

0 to 10% – 19% 10 to 20% – 11%
20 to 30% – 18% 30 to 40% – 6%
40 to 50% – 6% 50 to 75% – 31%
75 to 100% – 26%

If increased, go to #6

5. If meth lab seizures have decreased, are any the following sources of methamphetamines being used to meet the continuing demand for the drug? (Check any that apply)

Out of state importation – 85%
Out of county importation – 85%
Mexican drug importation – 71%
Other foreign drug importation – 19%
Other – 6%

6. In your best estimate, what percentage of the total arrests made in your county during the last year are methamphetamine related?

0 to 10% – 34%
10 to 20% – 15%
20 to 30% – 13%
30 to 40% – 8%
40 to 50% – 7%
50 to 75% – 11%
75 to 100% – 7%

7. Based on drug related arrests in the last year, which of the following drugs is the biggest problem in your county?

Cocaine – 22%
Heroin – 3%
Marijuana – 22%
Methamphetamine – 48%
Others – 5%

8. Does your county facilitate or sponsor a methamphetamine rehabilitation center or program?

Yes – 16% No – 81%

9. What percent of current county jail inmates are incarcerated because of methamphetamine related crimes?

0 to 10% – 36%
10 to 20% – 12%
20 to 30% – 10%
30 to 40% – 7%
40 to 50% – 7%
50 to 75% – 11%
75 to 100% – 6%

10. Has the use of methamphetamines in your county increased the workload of public safety staff during the last year?

Yes – 63% No – 36%

If no, skip to #12.

11. If workloads have increased, which of the following are happening (check all that apply).

Paying more overtime – 73%
Longer shifts – 63%
Changed work assignments – 70%
None of the above – 0%

12. Have any of the following crimes increased during the last year because of the presence of methamphetamines in your county?

Domestic violence – 48%
Simple Assault – 41%
Robbery or Burglary – 55%
Identity Theft – 31%
Other – 16% Don't Know – 0%

13. Has your county established an interagency special task force to address methamphetamine issues during the last year?

Yes – 36% No – 57%
No, but plans are in the works – 7%

14. In the last year has your county become a part of an intergovernmental or regional task force to address methamphetamine issues?

Yes – 39% No – 55%
No, but plans are in the works – 5%

15. Will the proposed elimination of Justice Assistance Grants impact your county's law enforcement efforts against methamphetamine?

Yes – 82%
Yes, will increase need for additional county funding – 80%
Yes, will require dismantling of meth task forces – 51%
Yes, will require reassignment of law enforcement staff – 61%
Yes, will require cutting staff dedicated to meth enforcement – 51%
No – 0%

States	Total
Alabama	7
Arizona	1
Arkansas	10
California	3
Colorado	9
Florida	9
Georgia	24
Idaho	10
Illinois	10
Indiana	21
Iowa	28
Kansas	14
Kentucky	26
Louisiana	4
Maine	2
Maryland	1
Michigan	19
Minnesota	15
Mississippi	10
Missouri	6
Montana	17
Nebraska	19
Nevada	5
New Hampshire	2
New Jersey	1
New Mexico	3
New York	12
North Carolina	16
North Dakota	11
Ohio	12
Oklahoma	8
Oregon	7
Pennsylvania	15
South Carolina	1
South Dakota	19
Tennessee	13
Texas	44
Utah	7
Vermont	2
Virginia	18
Washington	9
West Virginia	10
Wisconsin	16
Wyoming	4
TOTALS	500

Population Ranges	
Below 10,000	126
10,000 - 24,999	151
25,000 - 49,999	108
50,000 - 99,999	63
100,000 - 249,999	43
250,000 - 499,999	5
500,00 and above	4
TOTALS	500

Regions	Total
Lower Midwest	122
Northeast	34
Northwest	47
Southeast	79
Southwest	28
Upper Midwest	190
Totals	500